

NFAC No. 4333/78

4 October 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, National Foreign Assessment Center
FROM : Coordinator for Academic Relations, NFAC
SUBJECT : DCI Discussion/Dinner Topics

1. My problem is that Turner wants topics that are both worthy of attention at the highest levels of the Government and attractive to interesting people from outside. The NFAC people, on whom I am dependent for the development of topics, if not their initiation, are interested only in topics on which they are the experts. But unfortunately most of these topics, if they are of any importance, are being treated in other contexts. It is a seductive idea that there are, must be, many neglected topics, or topics on which there are minority views longing for expression, somewhere in NFAC. But if there are I have not found access to them. I work through the NIOs and the Office Directors. I am even dependent on them for the identification of the people who are knowledgeable on various subjects.

2. I have tried to initiate a few topics of my own, thus far without notable success. The following are two examples:

(a) Soviet sociology: the Yanov thesis. Yanov is a Soviet emigrant, now at Berkeley, who has developed an original and provocative theory of how Soviet society is structured and how it might evolve. I have discussed the possibility of using this thesis as a DCI dinner topic with [] on several occasions. He finds it interesting too and may, in time, be prepared to proceed with it. I shouldn't want to go very far, however, without Turner's approval (is the topic of sufficient interest to attract the higher level of outside participants he asks for?). Also, it wouldn't make much sense to discuss the thesis without having Yanov himself present, but would that be permissible?

(b) Population: the zero or negative growth problem. There have been articles in the press indicating that the governments of Germany (both West and East), Britain, and France are concerned about the economic effects of the fact that their populations have virtually ceased increasing. I tried this one on [] and Ernst. Both said there is nothing to it. This hardly accords with what I remember from my own study of economics, but they are the experts.

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3. My own expertise, such as it is (or was), is on Europe and the Mediterranean, on weapons balances, and on arms control measures. So far I have not been able to suggest topics in these areas that are both important enough to be discussed in the DCI dinner/discussion format and were not already being dealt with otherwise. I thought I had a good one just last week -- approximately, the impact on NATO relations of the increasing dependence on nuclear weapons located in Western Europe -- only to find that it is already the subject of study by the NIO/CF.

4. In brief, I can use any help I can get in the search. I should be particularly grateful if someone would suggest some way in which I can ferret out unconventional or even discordant judgments in NFAC without involving me in conflict with the Office Directors or NIOs.



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